

# MICHIGAN LEGWORK

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & ECONOMIC GROWTH

JUNE 2004

## *Unemployment Insurance Agency*

### Staff Overcome Challenges to Create Model System

**THE NUMBER WAS OVER A MILLION**—1,045,244 unemployment insurance claims in one year, 2003. It represented a significant 12.5 percent increase in claims from the previous year.

"Michigan last year had the largest number of increased claims of any state in the country," said Dave Plawecki, the DLEG deputy director who has responsibility for the Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA). "Add to that five extended benefit programs with different rules, and the climate for a 'perfect storm' was there."

At the same time, UIA employees were faced with a claims system that was automated in late 2002 but was not working. The public was not being served, and the complaints rolled in.

UIA Customer Services Director Chris Peretto said the "eye of the storm" was December 2002 and January 2003. "That was the highest peak load," he said. "We had double the claims. A ton of mail was coming in. We had 260,000 mailed-in claim forms and boxes of old forms piled in our large conference room."

"We inherited a nightmare," recalls DLEG Director David C. Hollister. "There was a high backlog of cases, a failure of technology, a recession and an

early retirement. But the UIA people believe in what they are doing. The complaints have dropped dramatically. They are to be honored and recognized for what they have done."

The story that follows is a true success story: It tells how the UIA staff banded together and, with supreme dedication, overcame a multitude of challenges and emerged with an unemployment benefits system that today can be considered a model.

Linda Karos, director of UIA's Internal Benefit Services, paints an unhappy picture of a year and a half ago. "In November 2002, 43 percent of the unemployment program staff had taken the early retirement," she said. "Branch offices were closed, and employees were sent to three call centers that were not operational yet. Customers couldn't find us."

These are the steps Linda said were taken in the first 90 days:

- Six branch offices were reopened for problem resolution (where 577,171 customers were served in 2003).
- Managers were placed in critical positions.
- A massive retraining initiative was begun.
- Overtime became mandatory and vacation periods were limited.



Meeting recently with Director Hollister to present UIA's accomplishments were: Seated, l. to r., Charlotte Duncil, Service Employees International Union (SEIU); Director Hollister; and Deputy Director Dave Plawecki. Standing, l. to r., Liza Estlund Olson, Management Services director; Sandy Damesworth, Benefit Services director; Linda Karos, Internal Benefit Services director; DLEG Assistant Deputy Director Marcia Valentine; Jackie Adams, SEIU; Sharon Bommarito, UIA director; Narvie Twyman, External Benefit Services director; Jackie Steed, Office of Trust Fund, Tax & Employer Compliance director; and Chris Peretto, Customer Services director. Sharon introduced Liza as the newest member of UIA's management team.

- Special response teams were set up for public and partner inquiries.
- Claims hotline hours were expanded to 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Within 90 days, UIA moved from a three- to four-month delay to a standard where a check is sent out the next day for 70 percent of the claims that come in. In addition, the backlog of problem or disputed cases was eliminated at the end of April 2004. "Everyone pitched in as a team to make this happen for customers," said Dave Plawecki.

Linda also relates the progress that has been made in processing Friend of the Court (FOC), Family Independence Agency (FIA) and Trade Read-

justment Act (TRA) forms: "Previously, FOC orders to deduct child support were paper court orders," she said. "There was no central accountability and a 15,000-case backlog." ➔

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## JoEllen Woods With UIA Called to Active Duty

One of the Unemployment Insurance Agency's own has been called to active duty in Iraq. JoEllen Woods, a UIA fraud investigator based in the Lansing area, is in the Air Force Reserves serving as a cargo specialist.

Most of her time is spent aboard C-130 cargo planes, which are prime transports for airdropping troops and equipment in hostile areas. She will go through advanced training in Georgia before being deployed with her unit to Iraq.

JoEllen's friends and co-workers wish the very best for her and hope for a safe and speedy return. She has worked for UIA for two and a half years.

Today, the majority of court orders are electronic, all go to a central unit, and the orders are entered into the system the day they are received."

Linda said the agency has similar "then and now" scenarios for FIA food stamp verification and TRA form processing. "Now, when we receive FIA forms, we fill them out and send them back the same day, and 100 percent of TRA payments are now made in the week the applications are received."

Chris Peretto says one of the goals of UIA is to have telephone-filed claims represent 50 to 55 percent of total claims by July 1. To this end, a new telephone filing system was gradually introduced throughout the state during 2003. Since October 2003, 289,843 claims have been taken over the telephone, representing 51 percent of total claims. The current customer wait time is 59 seconds.

Sandy Damesworth, director of UIA's Benefit Services, says the agency's July 1 goal of having 20 to 25 percent of claims filed over the Internet has already been reached. "We added automated questions in January, and we plan to add more functionality in the future," she said. "Right now, we're at 27 percent. We expect the number to go up even more as we add more functionality."

Future improvements include expanded hours of operation and military and federal filing capability.

Employers are benefiting from UIA's streamlined systems, too. DLEG Assistant Deputy Director Marcia Valentine says Michigan's five largest employers — Ford, General Motors, DaimlerChrysler, Delphi and Visteon — began participating in the new Employer Filed Claims (EFC) system. The program allows employers to file claims for their hourly workers during plant shutdowns or other large-scale layoffs — a major convenience.

"Nearly 160,000 claims were electronically processed by the Big Five for their workers in 2003," Marcia said. "We are now expanding the EFC to accommodate the next top 10 Michigan employers. Steelcase has just come on board. Our goal is to have 20 to 25 percent of the state's unemployment claims filed through the EFC."

In addition, the Employer Customer Relations (ECR) Unit reinstated the Employer Benefit Hotline in November 2003, said Narvie Twyman, director of UIA's External Benefit Services. This hotline provides one-on-one assistance to employers through a toll-free number. "Between late November and early April, we answered 33,000 calls," Narvie said.

A new problem resolution system for customers is also in the works. Narvie said four full-service problem resolution offices — in Lansing, Gaylord, Livonia and Marquette — will be operational by mid-July. The Lansing office has been open to the public since April 5.

"These offices are a safety net for people who would rather go up to a counter and speak with someone," she said. "We will also continue to staff our customer relations hotline to provide better service to our customers by focusing on their general questions about unemployment benefits. Some Michigan Works! service centers will also have dedicated phone lines."

The agency is not overlooking its employer customers. UIA is working to provide them the best possible service and has launched two important initiatives, said Jackie Steed, director of the Office of Trust Fund, Tax and Employer Compliance.

"We are taking steps to combat the problem of unemployment insurance tax avoidance, commonly called 'SUTA dumping,' that hurts all employers," Jackie said. "We're launching a redesign of our unemployment tax system to make it more customer friendly."

UIA is developing Internet and telephone-based systems that employers can use to register their businesses with the agency, she said. "Both processes will move the employer through the registration process much more expeditiously and immediately assign and give them their account numbers."

UIA Director Sharon Bommarito pointed out that, in addition to the redesign of the tax system, the agency will also be redesigning the benefit and claims adjudication systems, which were originally developed in the 1980s. She also reported that the backlog of problem claims has been eliminated, which at one time totaled more than 100,000 open cases. To help tackle the problem, UIA put together a special committee, which included claims staff, to review and improve the adjudication process for eliminating the backlog. In total, UIA staff closed some 350,000 problem claims over the past year and a half.

Another important UIA initiative is staff training and staff succession planning, which will ensure that the agency has an adequate number of staff trained to handle adjudications and keep current with the workload. With approximately 40 percent of staff new to the agency, ongoing training is of vital importance to make certain that staff have a complete and total understanding of the state's unemployment insurance law and how to implement it in their work, Sharon said.

Summing up the activities of the past year and a half, she said, "The unemployment system has survived. The backlog of claims has been eliminated. It's been a tremendous undertaking. It succeeded because of the hard work and dedication of UIA staff. We will continue to make improvements in the months and years ahead in an ongoing effort to better serve our customers."

# A Message from the Director

Congratulations to Jeannine Benedict, policy specialist, Bureau of Commercial Services, for her creativity in naming our employee newsletter *Michigan LEGwork*. DLEG employees selected *Michigan LEGwork* out of five names in online voting last month.

Jeannine was one of 127 staff members who sent in some very imaginative entries, ranging from the serious to the whimsical. I thoroughly enjoyed reviewing all 375 names submitted and commend our staff for their inventiveness. Jeannine will receive a most deserved \$50 from the DLEG Fun Committee for offering the winning name.

*Michigan LEGwork* symbolizes the bringing together of a number of different entities into one department in December 2003. The former name of our newsletter, *e-Discussions*, was created by using letters from the name of the former Department of Consumer & Industry Services. We now have a newsletter whose name reflects all of us in the Department of Labor & Economic Growth — very important as we support and live Governor Granholm's core values of inclusion, integrity, excellence, and teamwork.

This newsletter is *your* newsletter, and so it is fitting that the articles and photos communicate the critical roles *you* play in furthering the department's mission. Please contact Lynne Breen, *Michigan LEGwork* editor, at [breenl@michigan.gov](mailto:breenl@michigan.gov) if you have articles or questions.

In this premier issue, I would also like to thank all of you who helped make Employee Recognition Week such a success. The appreciation activities ranged from ice cream socials to staff breakfasts to free tickets to a Lansing Lugnuts baseball game.

Many of you took a moment to stop by my office on Wednesday, May 5, for Mexican cookies and hot chocolate. Because the open house was the same day as Cinco de Mayo, we chose that as our theme at the suggestion of Commission on Spanish-Speaking Affairs (COSSA) staff. A special thanks to COSSA Executive Director Mary Lou Mason and Executive Secretary Vicky Potter, who kindly provided the refreshments.

I hope summer gets off to a great start for all of you. Enjoy the sunshine.

Sincerely,



David C. Hollister



Director Hollister (center) joins with Mary Lou Mason, executive director of the Commission on Spanish-Speaking Affairs, and Richard Olivarez, state monitor advocate, Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker Program, Employment Service Agency, in displaying the Mexican Flag in recognition of Cinco de Mayo.



Chris Hunter, director of the Division on Deaf & Hard of Hearing, Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns (MCDC), and Maureen Wallace, interpreter coordinator, MCDC, had a chance to talk with Director Hollister at the open house.



# Employee Recognition Day Fosters Good Will



**Governor Jennifer Granholm observed State Employee Recognition Day** by spending part of her day May 3 at Cadillac Place in Detroit, where she greeted and shook hands with several hundred state employees.

The governor thanked the state workers for their hard work and dedication during these trying times. Above, UIA's Russell Stringer and Equal Opportunity Director Yvette Leonard greet the governor.



**Workers' Compensation Agency (WCA).** WCA staff in Lansing listen to Interim Director Craig Peterson (on left, in blue shirt) thank them for their past and future efforts on behalf of the agency and its customers. Employees there were treated to a pizza luncheon with soft drinks and ice cream. Craig is providing coffee break treats on visits to WCA offices in Ann Arbor, Flint, Grand Rapids, Mt. Clemens, Okemos and Pontiac.

WCA Funds Administration also had a pizza party and followed that up with an ice cream sundae/banana split day. Workers' Compensation magistrates, mediators, appellate commissioners and support staff in Detroit were served a breakfast of bagels, juice, coffee and "world famous" chocolate chip cookies baked by Jack Nolish, chair of the Workers' Compensation Board of Magistrates.



**Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA).** Juanita Linn in the Trust Fund Accounting Unit, Detroit, prepares to scoop out a taco from the variety of Mexican foods featured at her unit's luncheon. Approximately 40 employee recognition activities were held during the week of May 3 at UIA locations from Marquette to Detroit. A sign at the Management Services luncheon expressed the sentiment felt throughout UIA: "Thanks to all of you for all your hard work, enthusiasm, excitement, energy and dedication."



**Office of Financial and Insurance Services (OFIS).** OFIS Commissioner Linda A. Watters, shown above with Marcia Miller (left) and Barb Strelling (center), hosted an ice cream and cookies party to thank OFIS employees for their hard work and continued support. "Protecting consumers with fair and firm regulation is paramount, and your diligence, professionalism and expertise are recognized each and every day, although formally recognized one week each year," she said. Employees had their choice of a variety of toppings for their heaping bowls of ice cream. Several trays of delicious cookies also presented sweet temptation. The event was planned by the OFIS Employee Activity Committee.



**Michigan Tax Tribunal.** "Thanks for the photo op and the fun time on Employee Recognition Day," said Jack Van Coevering, Tribunal chair. "After spending time with Director Hollister and Deputy Director Swanson, we checked out the new office space that is being constructed for the Tax Tribunal on the second floor [of the Ottawa Building]. We returned to the Tribunal building for pizza, pop and a fun lunch. The Tribunal really appreciated Director Hollister's kind words of encouragement." Seated, l. to r., are Jack Van Coevering and Director Hollister. In the center row, l. to r., are Cindy Maurer, Vicky Stelwagen, Judge Patricia Halm and Judge Kimbal R. Smith III. In the third row, l. to r., are Marta Goff, Angela Awrey, Trisha Helms, Connie Toler and Jane Law.

Wage & Hour Division staff enjoyed an ice cream social, which will be repeated at regional meetings for field staff. Michigan Employment Security Board of Review staff were treated to a Cinco de Mayo luncheon.

## *Michigan Commission for the Blind* **Agency's Mission Contributes to State's Economic Success**

As a part of the December 2003 executive order that established the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth, the Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB) moved from the Family Independence Agency into DLEG. According to MCB State Director Patrick Cannon, the move makes sense.

"In DLEG, the entire department focuses on workforce and economic development functions," said Pat. "As one component agency, MCB helps people who are blind to find or retain jobs that fully utilize their abilities, skills and experience. We also provide employment-related training. We work with employers to help them find qualified workers who are blind, and we help employers retain current workers who are experiencing vision loss."

He added, "With an estimated 50,000 people who are blind living in Michigan, and with an increasing number of individuals choosing to delay retirement, we know that a significant portion of our qualified workforce consists of people who are or will be legally blind. In addition, people who are blind are employers, entrepreneurs, tourists, shoppers, consumers of goods and services, and in many other ways a part of our state's economic success. The governor recognized this, and that's why we're here."

In Michigan, since the 1950s, people who are blind have received educational, training and rehabilitation services through various agencies in the state. Beginning in the mid-1960s, these services have increasingly focused on independence in daily living, entrepreneurship and employment in the competitive labor market.

"We know that rehabilitation services are cost-effective," said



Left to right: Melody Lindsey, director, MCB Training Center; Patrick Cannon, state director, MCB; Leamon Jones, director, MCB Consumer Services Division.

Pat. "According to prominent national studies, the return on every dollar spent on rehabilitation is 11 to one. This means that rehabilitation is good public policy. Whenever we help someone move from reliance on government assistance to being a productive member of the workforce, earning a salary, and being able to purchase more goods and services in our economy, everyone benefits."

The current Michigan Commission for the Blind was established by P.A. 260 of 1978 and consists of a five-member, governor-appointed commission and a state agency by the same name. MCB provides the following services and resources to 4,500 people annually through its eight regional offices, the MCB Training Center in Kalamazoo and workshops statewide:

**Vocational Rehabilitation Services:** Diagnostic evaluations, vocational and personal counseling, job development and placement, vocational training, college and technical school training, low-vision aids and follow-up.

**Independent Living Services:** Services to older blind individuals so they can remain independent in their own homes, including information and referral, counseling, rehabilitation teach-

ing services, orientation and mobility (cane travel), Braille, other communication methods, low-vision services, adapted aids and appliances, skills for daily living and peer support groups.

**Deaf-Blind Services:** Rehabilitation and independent living services for individuals who are deaf-blind. Works closely with the Division on Deaf and Hard of Hearing within DLEG's Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns, the Michigan Department of Education and many community mental health agencies.

**Youth Low Vision Services:** Low-vision evaluations, devices and training to K-12 students referred by local and intermediate school districts.

**Business Enterprise Program:** The state licensing agency for blind persons operating vending stands and cafeterias in federal and state buildings, highway rest stops and visitor centers.

**MCB Training Center:** A residential facility providing goal-based training in skills of blindness (adaptive kitchen skills, cane travel, Braille and others), employment preparation, Business Enterprise Program and college preparation.

For more information, see [www.mcb1.org](http://www.mcb1.org) or call toll-free 1-800-292-4200 (voice/TTY).

## **Bringing Three Disability-Related Agencies Together in DLEG Is Both Historical and Logical**

When the Department of Labor & Economic Growth (DLEG) became a department on December 7, 2003, Michigan's three disability-related agencies were brought together "under one roof," a historic first for Michigan. The Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB) and the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns (MCDC) had been part of the Family Independence Agency, and Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) had been part of the Department of Career Development.

By moving these three agencies to DLEG, Governor Granholm signaled a clear recognition that persons with disabilities have significant contributions to make in furthering the economic development of our state. These agencies now can better support one another and collaborate to offer enhanced services to Michiganders with disabilities as well as to employers. As MCB State Director Patrick Cannon notes in the adjacent article, "the move makes sense." This article is the first of three highlighting the missions and services of MCB, MCDC and MRS.



## Midland Job Fair Draws More Than 1,200 Job Seekers

More than 1,200 job seekers and 64 employers participated in the 6th annual Mid-Michigan Job Fair, held April 15 at the Valley Plaza in Midland.



Mid-Michigan Job Fair team members Linda Hartgrove, Jim Garrison, Paul Kuehl, Rod Tanner, Holly LaBelle, Richard Kryza, Linda Parent, Mary Kent, Alexa Matthews, Sue Mann and Jeff Eagle.

"Once again, we succeeded in accomplishing an outstanding job, providing employment services to the mid-Michigan area," said Jeff Eagle, veterans' employment specialist with the Employment Service Agency (ESA) and job fair chairperson.

Jeff said interest in the job fair was higher than it was a year ago, noting that in 2003, 1,000 job seekers and 50 employers attended. Also, the number of veterans attending this year's job fair was 150 — up from 120 last year — reflecting an increase in the number of veterans.

"When National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve units are activated by the president, the individuals in these units automatically become veterans when they return. This is true

even if a person is activated for just one day," Jeff said. "As veterans, they have more federal benefits than they did before. My colleagues and I are here to help them understand their new benefits and also to help them find a job."

Jeff is one of four veterans' employment specialists in the Midland, Bay City and Saginaw area; ESA employs approximately 75 statewide.

ESA, Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), Michigan Works!, Sanford American Legion Post #443, the American Legion Department of Michigan and the Michigan Community Blood Centers sponsored this year's job fair, which included a very productive blood drive.

## ESA Excellence Award Presented Posthumously to Russell Jones

Russell Jones, former Region III manager of the Employment Service Agency (ESA), passed away February 6 after a battle with lung cancer. His colleagues across the state have honored him by naming him the 2004 recipient of the Robert T. Pendleton Award for Excellence in Service to Veterans.

The award was established by ESA's Customer Service Division to commemorate Robert T. Pendleton's commitment to helping veteran job seekers. A Vietnam veteran, Mr. Pendleton was deputy director of the Michigan Department of Career Development when he passed away in 2000.

The award was presented posthumously at the May meeting of ESA's veterans' representatives in Traverse City. Mr. Jones' wife, Dianna Jones, accepted the award.

Mr. Jones was a disabled Vietnam veteran who was wounded in combat. He began his career with the state of Michigan in the mid-1970s, serving Michigan residents as a disabled veterans' outreach worker (DVOW), a local veterans' employment representative (LVER), an employment service supervisor, and an Unemployment Insurance Agency branch manager before coming to the Employment Service Agency as Region III manager.

He received a number of nominations for the Pendleton Award, including letters from the Barry-Branch-Calhoun Workforce Development Board, the Michigan Works! Association and Region III staff.

These excerpts from the nomination letters capture the character and spirit of Mr. Jones: "He is unselfish in his service to the veterans and always displays a 'let's see if it will help our veterans attitude.'" And, "Russ displayed the integrity, honesty, professionalism and pride one would look for in a real leader. This Marine has not left his post. He served above and beyond the call of duty during his 'watch.'"



# Introducing the Human Resource (HR) Optimization Project

The state of Michigan is introducing the Human Resource (HR) Optimization Project to increase efficiency in delivering routine HR information and services to state employees. The project focuses on three tools that state employees will be required to use to access basic HR information. Together these tools are known as MI HR.

- ❖ **MI HR Self-Service** — Most employees are already familiar with Self-Service; it will continue to be a place where employees can directly update their own records for direct deposit, emergency contacts, family status, open enrollment, mailing address and home phone changes, beneficiary changes, qualified parking and e-mail address updates. In addition, employees can get updated information and forms for insurance coverage, tax withholding (W-4s), savings bonds, flexible spending accounts, earnings statements, leave balances and information on certifications/applicant pools.
- ❖ **MI HR Information** — New online access to HR information will be available that is tailored to fit state employment situations. It will be written in an easy-to-understand format to cover the basic benefit, payroll and HR issues most employees have at some point in their state careers.
- ❖ **MI HR Service Center** — On November 8, 2004, a new service will be available to DLEG employees when the MI HR Service

Center opens for phone calls. Service hours will span from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and trained customer service representatives will be available to assist employees with questions or to resolve problems related to HR information such as open enrollment, benefit information and changes, personal information and changes, and payroll information and changes such as EFTs, savings bonds and parking. Customer service representatives will have information at their fingertips to help employees understand and navigate MI HR and assist them in making changes.

By combining these three tools, MI HR is intended to enhance and support the self-service experience for state employees. Visit the MI HR Employee Self-Service Gateway at [www.michigan.gov/selfserv](http://www.michigan.gov/selfserv) to log in to Self-Service from work or home. You can also view the MI HR flier by clicking on "Coming This Fall."

The DLEG Office of Human Resources is committed to the goal of making this a smooth and positive transition for DLEG employees. More information about the MI HR Service Center and what it means for state employees will be shared as we near the November 8 implementation date. OHR will continue to assist department employees with strategic issues such as classifications, selections, recruitment, labor relations, performance management, disability management and, of course, processing payroll.

## Agricultural Web Site to Help With Literacy

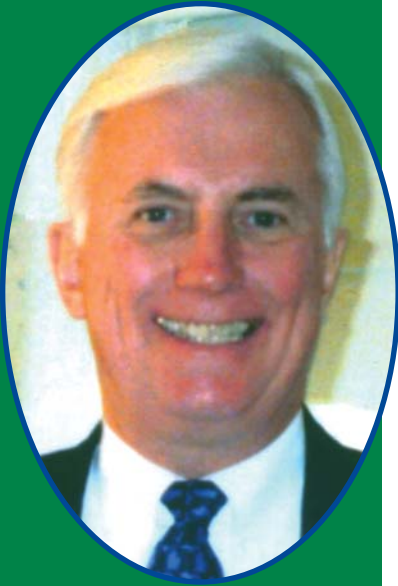
The Department of Labor & Economic Growth's Web site for the Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker Program ([www.michaglabor.org](http://www.michaglabor.org)) is receiving national attention.

The National Center for Family Literacy, based in Louisville, Ky., has requested permission to use information from the Web site in a free online course on "a site designed to help literacy volunteers, program staff, and community members build a more literate nation." The course is called Serving Homeless and Migrant Families in Literacy Programs.

"We believe this Web page is a valuable resource to help students understand the enormity and variety of agricultural jobs available in your state, and we hope that you will allow us this opportunity to promote your work," wrote Dr. Sylvia Cobos Lieshoff.

Of course, Dr. Lieshoff was informed that the center is welcome to use the information.





# Larry Was the Best!

## A Tribute by Patrick Cannon, State Director, Michigan Commission for the Blind

It was with deep sadness by all who knew and worked with Larry Best at the state of Michigan, and in particular the Michigan Commission for the Blind, to learn of his passing May 6, 2004. Larry's death came just nine weeks after his retirement and at the end of a tenacious, three-year battle with cancer.

At his recent retirement celebration, Larry received high accolades and commendations for his contributions within various state departments during his nearly 30 years of service to the people of the state of Michigan. Many of his friends had the opportunity to express their admiration and affection for Larry. His professionalism and generosity earned him widespread acclaim and deepest appreciation.

Larry was a believer in contributing to his community. He volunteered for more than 15 years at Woldumar Nature

Center and had been active in other community organizations, including recycling programs, WKAR pledge drives, and the Magic Ride bike-athons, the very successful fundraisers for child abuse prevention. He particularly enjoyed his hobbies of singing in the Patch Chords barbershop quartet, caning chairs and working in his garden. Many organizations and committees working to improve the lives of Michigan citizens with disabilities used Larry's expertise.

He earned his bachelor's degree in political science and then served in the Peace Corps, teaching English as a foreign language in Turkey. Upon completion of his master's degree in sociology, Larry began his career in public service for the state of New York, working for several years with Services to the Aging before moving to Michigan.

In the late 1970s, Larry became supervisor of the Policy and Program Division, Michigan Office of Services to the Aging. Following that, he served in the Department of Labor and the Department of Management and Budget before becoming deputy director at the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns. He later became director of the Administrative Services Division at the Michigan Commission for the Blind, where he served for 14 years.

Professionally and personally, Larry approached each day with high energy, enthusiasm and a relentless commitment to excellence. His engaging personality, humor and musical talent won him the respect and affection of all who had the privilege of knowing Larry, and he will be dearly missed.



## Liza Estlund Olson Joins UIA

Liza Estlund Olson has joined the Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA) as director of Management Services. She directs the Central Support Unit, the Center for Learning and Development, the Fraud Investigation Unit and the new Restitution Initiative Unit. She will also develop and imple-

ment the agency's strategic planning activities. In addition, she serves as liaison to DLEG on budget, finance, purchasing, and contract and human resources issues. She is also serving as liaison to the U.S. Department of Labor on the federal budget process.

For the past seven years, Liza was director of the Department of Management Services for the City of Lansing. Prior to that, she had been chief of staff to the mayor of Lansing.

## MRS Field Office Relocates

**The Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) office in Pontiac has moved to Waterford. The new address is 2805 Pontiac Lake Road, Suite 1A, Waterford, MI 48328. The new telephone number is 248/706-2600, and the new fax number is 248/706-5943.**



# What's Cool at DLEG

## We Produce Two—Yes, Two!—TV Programs

*This column is a new monthly feature designed to acquaint DLEG employees with the many innovative and exciting programs across our department. If you would like to make a suggestion for this column, send your idea to [breenl@michigan.gov](mailto:breenl@michigan.gov).*

Did you know that the Department of Labor & Economic Growth produces two cable television programs from its own TV studio at Cadillac Place in Detroit?

"Consumer's Corner," hosted by DLEG Director David C. Hollister, helps Michigan families make informed decisions by offering up-to-date consumer information on topics ranging from fire safety to cutting utility bills. The monthly, 30-minute show also educates viewers

about resources available to consumers from state government.

The program is shown locally on public access stations across the state. Go to [www.dleg.state.mi.us/consumerscorner](http://www.dleg.state.mi.us/consumerscorner) to learn when the program will air in your community.

"The Job Show," hosted by Nirva Civilus, focuses on issues related to job seekers and employers in Michigan. Nirva talks with workers, bosses, government officials, trendsetters and other experts in their fields to bring viewers the latest on job prospects and services for workers, employers and students.

Thirty minutes in length, The Job Show recently highlighted the Employment Service

Agency's Project MOVE with Neil Cooper and the Wage & Hour Division with John Finn. The next program will feature a segment on how the Michigan State Housing Development Authority is assisting with the Cool Cities campaign.

Check out this Web site for more information on The Job Show:  
[www.dleg.state.mi.us/jobshow](http://www.dleg.state.mi.us/jobshow).

Office of Media Technology staff who are "behind the scenes" in the production of these programs are Dave Callanan, Steve Kline, Debra Hill, Lynda Robinson, Alison Rodgers, Sue Willers and Veronica Armstead. Congratulations to everyone involved in bringing these programs to Michigan residents!

## Veterans' Outreach Worker Gives Onetime Offenders Better Chance for Jobs

Andrew Washington, disabled veterans' outreach worker (DVOW) stationed at the John D. Dingell V.A. Medical Center in Detroit, has been very busy gathering the information and connections that will enable him to assist his customers with criminal records in a fashion that most of his colleagues didn't even know was possible.

What is this new process that Andrew is working on? It is called expunging of criminal records, part of the Second Chance Program in the Employment Service Agency (ESA). It isn't about giving legal advice; rather, it is having information about where to refer customers who have felony convictions to enable them to clear their criminal records.

The purpose is to expunge the record of one-time offenders (people with only one felony conviction) who satisfy the requirements of the Setting Aside Convictions Act (Act 213 of 1965). This enables them to qualify for jobs they could not obtain if they had a criminal record.

Andrew has been on the road the past few months sharing this information with other areas of ESA.

Region IV ESA Manager Judy Ezop wrote: "We had the Region IV quarterly meeting this week. Andrew Washington [of Region I] gave a presentation on expunging criminal records. Andrew did an excellent job; many staff commented to me that this was not only an excellent presenta-

tion, but it was also good that they could meet someone from another region."

Cora Gregory from the Michigan Works! Service Center in Wayne sent an e-mail message thanking Region I for allowing Andrew to share the information on expunging criminal records. "It is through information sharing such as this that allows us to continue helping those that might otherwise find themselves back behind bars."

Requests for Andrew to make a presentation on this topic are starting to grow. He has received requests from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Neighborhood Service Organization and Building a Better Detroit.



## Henry Green Recognized for International Code Council Role



Henry L. Green, director of the Bureau of Construction Codes & Fire Safety, received a Special Delivery from the Director for being appointed secretary/treasurer of the International Code Council Board of Directors. He was elected to the board in 2002 and previously had served on the board from 1994 to 1998. Deputy Director Dennis Sykes (left) congratulated Henry, saying, "The department and the state of Michigan are lucky to have the level of dedication you've given your job and continue to give. Thanks!"

## Marge Paquet Lauded for Mediation Skills



Labor Mediator Marge Paquet (center) was presented with a Special Delivery from the Director by Bureau of Employment Relations Director Ruthanne Okun (left) and Lansing Mediation Supervisor Freda Mills. Marge was the subject of two glowing letters recently, one from the Peter White Public Library, Marquette, and the other from the Copper Country Education Association, Hancock. Both letters were highly complimentary of Marge's mediation skills, which she demonstrated in the Upper Peninsula earlier this year. Please see excerpts in the "We Get Letters" section on page 15.

## Welcome New DLEG Employees

A warm welcome is extended to these new DLEG staff: Tony Rodarte, activity therapy aide at the Michigan Career & Technical Institute (MCTI); Karine Norton, also an activity therapy aide at

MCTI; and Staci Smith, administrative support person, Consultation Education & Training Division, Michigan Occupational Safety & Health Administration (MIOSHA).



# Sharon Walker Honored for Great Customer Service

Sharon Walker, state coordinator, Workforce Investment Act Section, Office of Workforce Development, was presented with a Special Delivery from the Director following a nomination from Barb Hawkins with the Michigan Works! Region 7B Employment and Training Consortium. "The customer service we receive from Sharon has always been exemplary. Any questions or concerns are always answered very promptly. I enjoy working with Sharon and hope to continue for years to come," Barb said. Pictured are, l. to r., Vicki Enright, director, Office of Workforce Development, Workforce Programs; Sharon Walker; Janet Howard, director, Workforce Transition Division; and Gary Clark, chief, Workforce Investment Act Section.



## **"Special Delivery from the Director"**

**I would like to nominate the following staff member to receive a "Great Job" acknowledgement from the Director:**



Name of Nominee	Submitted By
Office/Bureau	Classification
Telephone	Office Location

**The reason I am nominating this person:**

Bureau/Office Director	Date

Bureau/Office Director: Please sign and return to DLEG Media & Public Relations, Ottawa Bldg., 4th Floor, Lansing 48909 - Fax: 517-241-1580

# Professional Activities & Community Service

**Neil Cooper**, veterans' coordinator, Employment Service Agency (ESA), and **Scott Creswell**, with ESA's Project MOVE, were interviewed for the cover story "Veteran Employment Reps Across America" in *G.I. JOBS* magazine, May edition. The magazine is distributed to all separating military person-

nel as they prepare to enter civilian employment. In the article, Neil and Scott discuss Michigan's credentialing program to assist newly discharged veterans in translating their military training and experience into good civilian careers. To see the article, go to [www.gijobs.net](http://www.gijobs.net).

**Dave Halter**, manager of Michigan Rehabilitation Services' Oakland County District, has been honored by The Arc of Oakland County. On March 26, Dave was presented with the prestigious Dove Award for Lifetime Achievement, an award that recognizes individuals

who make significant contributions to enhance the overall quality of life for persons with mental retardation. During his career, Dave has overseen vocational rehabilitation services for more than 15,000 persons in Oakland County. Congratulations, Dave, on this well-deserved honor!

Congratulations to **Terry Johnson** with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), who has just passed the bar exam! A departmental specialist with MRS, Terry earned her law degree from Thomas M. Cooley Law School in Lansing. She is also a graduate of Spring Arbor University, where she majored in human resource management. Terry is responsible for MRS's Customer Satisfaction Initiative, a requirement of the

federal Workforce Investment Act. In this regard, she makes sure customer satisfaction is measured across the state each year to ensure customer input and ongoing improvement of agency programs and services. Terry also works on legislative issues with MRS field offices and provides technical assistance to field staff on MRS initiatives and policies. Terry has worked for the state of Michigan for nearly 20 years.

Congratulations go to **Dr. James F. Levande**, technology education consultant, Office of Career & Technical Preparation, who recently had an article accepted for publication in

*The Journal of Technology Skills*. His paper, "A Curricular and Instructional Challenge: Teaching and Learning for Technological Literacy/Capability," is available this month.

Office of Financial and Insurance Services (OFIS) employees have given generously of their money and time to benefit Habitat for Humanity Lansing and Junior Achievement (JA). Many OFIS staff members bought garden shed raffle tickets or made cash donations as part of the "jeans for a good cause" program and helped raise \$148 for Habitat for Humanity Lansing. The organization has completed 51 homes in the Lansing area, and five more

homes are in the planning stages. Team OFIS, represented by **Bob Caruso**, west regional supervisor for the Bank and Trust Division, his wife, **Kathleen**, and **Carla Thieleman**, departmental analyst in the Conduct Review Division, participated in the May 1 Capitol Bancorp 5K for JA Run and Walk for Education held in downtown Lansing. OFIS employees contributed approximately \$200 to this valuable program.

The Michigan Broadband Development Authority (MBDA) has been a classroom volunteer with Junior Achievement (JA) of Mid Michigan since January. In April, MBDA employees **Chris LaGrand**, **Tom Byrne**, **Debra Sitts** and **Brad Burton** participated in JA's Crazy Bowl. This bowling event helps raise money for JA's mission of "helping to

insure every child in American has a fundamental understanding of the free enterprise system." This year, the Crazy Bowl raised more than \$29,000. The MBDA team placed fifth in amount of money raised, and Chris LaGrand placed second among all participants in the amount he raised personally.



# [More] Professional Activities & Community Service

Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) employees are increasing the number of worksites they visit that have Spanish-speaking employees. To enhance communication, MIOSHA is offering a beginning Spanish class each Monday at the Farmington office. The Monday meetings will go through July, then the class will change to biweekly, then monthly, as the students become more proficient. Volunteer participants in this pilot program are

**Eric Waters, Bob Beitel, Jim Dykes, Pat Sullivan, Jennifer Clark-Denson, Chuck Slavik, Leona Boyer, James Kivell, Jeff Kelley, Alisa Cleveland, Val Hicks, Sonja Blair, Cindy Politowicz, John Byrne and Dana Girty.** MIOSHA expresses its appreciation to these volunteers as well as to **Robin Spaulding**, who developed the pilot, and to **Kay Salazar and Felix Acevedo** for their invaluable assistance.

The Michigan Career & Technical Institute's Cabinetmaking/Millwork training program is featured in both the January and February 2004 editions of the national publication *Cabinetmaker*. Department head **Jim Welliver** and instructor **Adam Reynolds** are mentioned, along with the fact that MCTI is the first post-secondary school in the country to offer

WoodLINKS USA certification to its students. WoodLINKS certification is an international standard for entry-level employment in the North American wood industry. In addition, the L.L. Johnson Lumber Mfg. Co. in Charlotte profiled Jim Welliver in the spring 2004 edition of its newsletter, *Straight Grain*.

**Duncan Wyeth**, executive director of the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns, has been elected to the Board of Trustees of United Cerebral Palsy. Duncan has been a con-

sumer advocate for disability issues for more than 30 years, serving in a wide range of professional and volunteer roles in both the state of Michigan and nationally.

**Bob Dayringer**, onsite health consultant, Consultation Education & Training Division (CET), MIOSHA, has been appointed to the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists Ventilation Committee. The function of the committee is to review and revise the *Industrial Ventilation Manual*—

*A Manual of Recommended Practice*. The committee is authoring a second companion manual, which will include chapters addressing contractor hiring, troubleshooting ventilation systems, energy savings and maintenance. Bob has been asked to author a chapter on exposure assessment.

**Nancy Lampman**, staff support with MIOSHA's CET Division, has been elected district governor of the Lions Club, District 11-C2. Also, Shellene Boyd, CET Division staff sup-

port, was inducted into the Charlotte Lions Club during a candlelight ceremony March 10. Great community service, Nancy and Shellene!

DLEG staff members at Cadillac Place in Detroit were among the many who donated food to the Gleaners Community Food Bank during a three-week food drive in April and May. The

drive resulted in 728 pounds of food and necessities for persons living in Southeast Michigan. The drive was coordinated with the help of **Unemployment Insurance Agency** staff.

**Don Dees**, site manager of the Michigan Rehabilitation Services office in Flint, was the keynote speaker at Goodwill of Mid-Michigan's recent annual meeting. Don spoke to approximately 150 attendees on the power of partner-

ships and collaboration. Gary Smith, president and CEO, Goodwill of Mid-Michigan, said he was very pleased to have Don as keynote speaker because of the strong partnership between the two organizations.

# KCP & GEAR UP Host Classroom Equity Conference

More than 330 postsecondary educators, administrators and others attended the 14th annual Equity in the Classroom Conference, held recently at Michigan State University. The yearly conference focuses on achieving parity in higher education in enrollment, retention and graduation for underrepresented minority students and academically and economically disadvantaged students.

It was hosted by the King-Chavez-Parks (KCP) Initiative and GEAR UP Michigan (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), both of DLEG's Postsecondary Services, and 20 Michigan public and private universities.

A faculty search committee component of the conference outlined the immediate steps that institutions can take to increase racial and ethnic diversity within their faculty. Featured presenters included Jonathan Alger, assistant general counsel at the University of Michigan and one of the team that worked on the university's two landmark Supreme Court admissions lawsuits; Dr. Cathy Trower, Harvard University, one of the nation's foremost researchers on faculty inequalities; and Dr. Caroline Sotello Viernes Turner, Arizona State University, whose current research includes access and equality in higher education, organizational change and faculty development.

The conference was particularly timely, held on the same day as Gov. Jennifer Granholm's announcement of the establishment of the Commission on Higher Education and Economic Growth, headed by Lt. Gov. John Cherry. Michigan is currently in the bottom tier of states in terms of adults with postsecondary degrees.

The commission will focus on doubling the number of college graduates and ensuring that they have the skills they need to succeed in the 21st century workplace.

"Postsecondary Services looks forward to working with the commission to help Michigan achieve these goals through projects and events such as the Equity in the Classroom Conference and others," said Jim Folkening, director of Postsecondary Services.

Conference opening speaker Dr. Charles Willie, Harvard Graduate School of Education, spoke on "Equity and Excellence — The Two-fold Goal of Education." Other featured speakers were Dr. Terrence Maltbia of Columbia University, who spoke on "Cultural Competencies That Foster Equity in the Academy," and former State Sen. John Schwarz, M.D., a strong supporter of the King-Chavez-Parks Initiative when he was in the Legislature.



At the Equity in the Classroom Conference were Dr. Cathy Trower, Harvard University; Pam Martell, King-Chavez-Parks Initiative; Dr. Charles Willie, Harvard Graduate School of Education; and Jim Folkening, director, Postsecondary Services.



Among the conference participants were, l. to r., Dr. Don Tuski, president of Olivet College; featured speaker former State Sen. John Schwarz, M.D.; and Rudy Redmond, administrator of the King-Chavez-Parks Initiative.



# We Get Letters ... and E-Mails!

We are pleased each month to publish complimentary letters, notes, cards, phone calls and e-mail messages sent to DLEG employees from external agencies and organizations and the general public. Send, fax or e-mail them to Lynne Breen, DLEG Media & Public Relations, P.O. Box 30004, Lansing, MI 48909; 517/241-1580 (fax); breenl@michigan.gov.

Labor Mediator **Marge Paquet**, Bureau of Employment Relations, was highly complimented in two letters sent to Lansing in March. Excerpts from the letter from the Peter White Public Library, Marquette: "I would like to tell you how impressed I was with Marge and her mediation style. She was just wonderful! She met with both sides in a respectful and helpful manner. She seemed to take a personal interest in our case and worked very hard to resolve all of our open issues. She was a pleasure to work with, and I can say this was a

very positive experience." Excerpts from the letter from the Copper Country Education Association, Hancock: "Last week alone, we had five mediations in five separate districts. Marge Paquet provided the mediation service. We were very impressed with her skillful handling of the meetings. In addition to accurately communicating the parties' rationale, she often made valuable suggestions that ultimately led to agreements." *Please see a photo of Marge receiving a Special Delivery from the Director on page 10.*



At the recent 74th annual Michigan Safety Conference, the Consultation Education & Training (CET) Division, Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA), presented seven classes, drawing an audience of about 800 conference attendees. Attendee comments overheard were: "I love coming to the CET programs. I always get such great information"; "The handouts are so well done and the book for-

mat makes it easy to take back to the workplace"; and "I'm going to sit in your sessions all day as I know I will get everything I need in one place." CET Supervisor **Sheila Ide** served as chairperson of the CET Division of the conference. Many MIOSHA employees work throughout the year to provide first-class programming for the 5,000 conference participants. The Michigan conference is the second largest of its kind in the country.

An attorney who represents a township in Washtenaw County called to say the following about Senior Safety Officer **Todd Strong**, General Industry Safety and Health Division, MIOSHA, who had conducted a referral inspection at a firm within the township: "In these trying times for state government, you probably don't get many positive calls from the public. I

want you to know that I have had several conversations with Mr. Strong, and while he was not able to give me the information I needed, he directed me to the appropriate staff to file a FOIA request. Mr. Strong has been very professional while explaining your policies and is a fine representative of your organization."

**Garrett Pazur**, manager of the Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) office in Livonia, received this letter: "I had the pleasure of working with two counselors, **Pat Cade** and **May Alam**, who were both very professional in assisting me. **Tracie Lewis-Jennings** was my placement specialist and has assisted me with two positions, including my current position with a medical center. The point that I would like to stress is that

everyone extended their very best efforts to help me achieve my employment goal. I think that the staff are very dedicated to their jobs and the clients they serve. The patience extended to me during a brief illness really demonstrated the integrity of the agency to serve persons with disabilities even when they have a setback. It is important to me that you know that your staff go beyond the norm in helping the clients they serve."

**Rosanne Renauer**, manager of Community Alliances and Youth Services, MRS, received this letter from the Michigan Occupational Special Populations Association (MOSPA): "On behalf of the conference committee and all who attended the 2004 MOSPA state conference, I offer a hearty thank you and the deep appreciation of our members for your presentation on Michigan

Rehabilitation Services. A quick look through the evaluations showed that those who attended were very pleased with the product we offered this year and recognized that we gave them another outstanding professional development event. Your presentation helped us to meet our objectives. We hope you enjoyed your participation as much as we enjoyed having you as a presenter."

# Employees On the Move



Warm congratulations to these DLEG employees: **Matt Macomber**, C.I.H., General Industry Safety and Health Division, Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA), Saginaw, reallocated to senior industrial hygienist ... **James Brusen**, with MIOSHA's General Industry Safety and Health Division, Mid Michigan, reallocated from safety officer to senior safety officer ... **Barry Simmonds**, new MIOSHA Consultation and Training Division consultant in the Upper Peninsula, from General

Industry Enforcement inspector in the Thumb ... **Felix Acevedo**, new onsite safety supervisor with MIOSHA's Consultation Education and Training Division, formerly supervisor with the General Industry Safety and Health Division ... **Karen Kindel**, Office of Human Resources, who has accepted a position with the Bureau of Construction Codes & Fire Safety as an office supervisor ... and **Joy Inniss-Johnson**, Michigan Rehabilitation Services counselor, Detroit West District, promoted to program development

consultant in the MRS Grants and Resource Development Section in Lansing.

Best wishes to **Amanda Heinze**, MIOSHA Standards Section, who has accepted a position with the Michigan State Police.

Happy and healthy retirement wishes to **Paula Smith**, manager of the Testing and Education Services Unit, Licensing Division, Commercial Services ... and to **Connie Wilcox**, Michigan Rehabilitation Services counselor in Macomb County.

## ESA Staff Raise Career Awareness

Detroit-based Employment Service Agency (ESA) staff co-sponsored a Career Awareness Summit with the City of Detroit's Office of Personnel Management in February at

the Cobo Conference and Exhibition Center. The 6,121 participants far exceeded attendance expectations.

"Throughout the day, Cobo Center was filled with people looking for an opportunity not just to gain a job, but to make life-altering changes for the better," said Donna Cooper, director of ESA's Customer Service Division. "Several of the employers have stated that they have received an abundance of resumes, and they are more than happy with the qual-

ity of people who attended the summit."

Helping to make the event a success were, l. to r., Henry Galnor, ESA Region I manager and event co-chair; Brenda Ely, ESA acting director; Bob Johnson, DLEG senior executive assistant director; Ardis Cazeno, director, ESA Labor Exchange Services; Richard Fair, manager, ESA Employment Central of Detroit, and event co-chair; and Donna Cooper.



The Unemployment Insurance Agency is sponsoring a blood drive Tuesday, July 6, in Room L-500, Cadillac Place, Detroit. Hours will be 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Donors can sign up online ([congdonvaleriea@michigan.gov](mailto:congdonvaleriea@michigan.gov)) or call **Valerie Congdon** at 313/456-2145 to register.

# Department of Labor & Economic Growth

## Golf Outing '04

Ledge Meadows Golf Course, M-43, Grand Ledge  
9 a.m., Friday, August 13

It's time to form your team (men, women or mixed) and sign up for the DLEG Annual Golf Outing. The format for the outing is a four-person team scramble. The cost is \$45 per person, which includes 18 holes of golf, cart, lunch and prizes. Most of us don't take this too seriously, so if you want to participate and don't have a team, we can assign you to one. Come on out to the course, meet your fellow workers and have a good time. Your committee: Mary Ann Howe, 517/322-1743 (howemaryann@aol.com), Robin Spaulding, 517/322-1811 (rspaul@cis.state.mi.us) and Kisha Spagnuolo, 517/241-2655 (kspagn@cis.state.mi.us). The sign-up deadline is August 1. If you have any questions, call us or send an e-mail.

### Sign-Up Form

Team Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Cart # 1

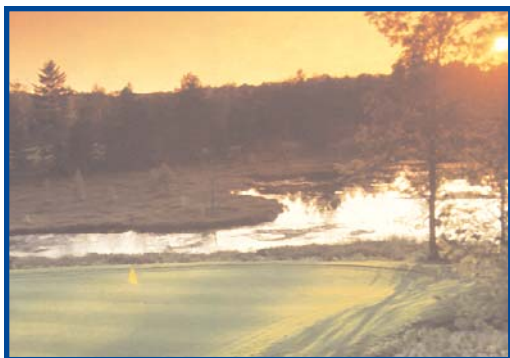
1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Cart #2

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Send form & payment to:

Mr. Robin Spaulding  
4914 Churchill Road  
Leslie, MI 49251





# Experiencing What Mom and Dad Do for the State of Michigan

"Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day" was celebrated by DLEG employees throughout the state on Thursday, April 22.



The sons and daughters representing Team "A" in the Bureau of Construction Codes & Fire Safety proudly show off the recreational park they built with Popsicle sticks. Seated, l. to r., are Deshon Leek, grandson of Tennison Barry; Jenna Jaquette, daughter of Deb Jaquette; Torey Wilson, granddaughter of Hugh Williams; and Sadie Bass, daughter of Laurie Bass. Standing, l. to r., are Grace Bass, daughter of Laurie Bass; Zachary Lippert, nephew of Teresa Lippert; and Taylor Aben, daughter of Beth and Bob Aben.

One of the more active areas was the Office of Trust Fund, Tax and Employer Compliance, Unemployment Insurance Agency, Detroit. Linda Kalinowski, John Mason and Christina Archer planned the activities and spent their work day with the children by giving them a tour of the different areas, explaining the functions of the Tax Office, and guiding them through the steps of opening mail, date-stamping checks and correspondence, labeling and taking packages to the mailroom, and delivering daily computer reports to appropriate staff.

Mark Carlin, Robert Czech, Climie Seals and Christine Shackleford presented a puppet show to explain how account examiners audit employer



Construction Code Team "B" members take a break from building their recreational park to pose for the camera. Seated, l. to r., are Josh Curtis, son of Diahann Curtis; Melissa Pohl, daughter of Betsy Pohl; and Jessica Whipple, daughter of Darlene Kita. Standing, l. to r., are Cody Metcalf, son of Andrea Metcalf; Rebecca Niedzielski, daughter of Heather Fields; and Kiali Curtis, daughter of Diahann Curtis.

books and records. Then they gave the stuffed animals and cartoon characters to the children. (Mark purchased the stuffed animals.) Bill Bryan, Juanita Lim and Emily Austria explained how to balance a checkbook.

The Bureau of Construction Codes & Fire Safety in Okemos also greeted the day with enthusiasm. According to Bureau Director Henry Green, the "Construction Code Kids" were divided into teams of blue and green, depending on their loyalty to the Wolverines or Spartans. The kids gathered at noon for a "working lunch" of pizza, pop and cupcakes to gain an understanding of what teams can accomplish.

"Each team was given the same building supplies of Popsicle sticks, construction paper, glue, tape, scissors and rubber bands and asked to decide upon, and then build, a structure or facility that Michigan has already or needs to make it a great place for kids to grow up in," Henry said. "Interestingly, each group chose to develop a recreational park. With limited oversight but major encouragement from the parents, grandpar-



Participating in Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day were children of employees in the Office of Trust Fund, Tax & Employer Compliance, Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA). Pictured, l. to r., are Pamela Chew; Pleshette Gadson; Tereyah Gadson, daughter of Pleshette; Ashley Wilson, daughter of Rita Henderson; Teneyah Gadson, daughter of Pleshette; Audrey Johnson; and Tekeyah Gadson, daughter of Pleshette.

ents and aunts in attendance, the teams got to work, and some pretty awesome facilities for family fun were created."



Matia (left) and Brittanise Charleston went to work with their mother, Priscilla Charleston, at the UIA Tax Office.

# DLEG Kids Are COOL Contest

Many of the children who participated in "Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day" on April 22 picked up crayons and color markers and entered the DLEG Kids Are Cool Contest. They were asked to draw or color one of the following: what they want to be when they grow up and why these careers are cool, or the DLEG employees in their lives and why their work is cool, or what they think would make—or does make—Michigan a cool state in which to live. The winning entries will be announced in the July issue of *Michigan LEGwork*, and the artwork will be displayed in the lobby near the office of DLEG Director David. C. Hollister.



In the Bureau of Commercial Services, Corporation Division Customer Assistance Manager Robert Engle (second row, left) poses for the camera with Brandon (front left), Nicholas (second row), and Zachary, sons of Lola Rivera (center), and with Holly Caksackkar and daughter Kelsi Weaver.



Cassie Ryckman (right) of Houghton Lake went to work with her mom, Martha Ryckman (center), a Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) counselor in Cadillac. Also in the photo is Elaine Carter, manager of MRS's Northern Michigan District.



Drawing their ideas of what is "cool" are Gage Wickman, stepson of Patrick Hudson, Energy Office; Katina Léger, daughter of Carla Léger, Michigan Employment Security Board of Review; Connor Campbell, son of Maura Campbell, Media & Public Relations; and Jordan Wenzlick, grandson of Linda Cook, Media & Public Relations.



Children who "went to work" at the Unemployment Insurance Agency RIC Center in Grand Rapids completed drawings and word search puzzles. Front row, l. to r.: Celestina Buentello, daughter of Leticia Buentello, and Tomvion Chatman, grandson of DeBorah Hancock. Second row, l. to r.: Callie Chulski, daughter of Barb Chulski; Artabelle Perkins, daughter of Mendy Perkins; Daniel Phelps II, son of Catrina McMath; D'Angelo Piggue, son of Kathy Anderson; and Steven Caldwell, son of Sherry Caldwell. Third row, l. to r.: Sierra Matthewson, daughter of Deb Matthewson; Nidia Rodriguez, niece of Sylvia Morehead; and Aaron Smith, son of Sherry Smith.



In the Licensing Division, Commercial Services, Director Jean Boven presented certificates of appreciation to all of the children. In the photo, family members are standing directly behind their children. Left to right, they are Sharon Howell and daughter Nikole Howell, Paivi Beverly and son Taishon Beverly-Smith, Colleen Billington and son Bret Billington, Paige Colley and son Josh Colley, Sandy Chester and daughter Kayla Pohl, Dianne Bailey and daughter Sara Bailey, Susan Hensley and daughter Kristen Hensley, Amy Vallier and niece Paige Filice, and Jean Boven. One daughter who came to work with her mom said, "Boy, state employees really work hard!"



# Proud Mom Relays News About Son's Happy, Sad and Rewarding Job

*Editor's Note: Dawn Stiles, a secretary in the Office of Career & Technical Preparation, sent an e-mail message to me shortly after Take Your Son or Daughter to Work Day. The following article includes excerpts from her message as well as from letters written by her son, Mark Stiles.*



Paul Felch, Glenn Williams, Chuck Colby and Mark Stiles of Three Men and a Tenor.

"I wish I could have gone to work with my son this past week," Dawn said. "What he is

doing is much more important than anything he would have experienced if he would have come to work with me. But, after all, he is 36 years old. I am attaching one photo for you to see who my son and his group are and also attaching copies of his two letters to us, his family, while on tour in Germany. I e-mailed him that if I could possibly be any more proud of him (and his brother and two sisters), I think I would explode. I think this is pertinent to our focus on the impact we as parents make on our children. Apparently, my message as my children were growing up was a good one — that he is happy doing what he is doing!"

Mark Stiles is part of "Three Men and a Tenor," a group often seen on public television and that has been honored with the Spirit of Detroit award, named "Entrepreneurs of the Year" by *Greater Lansing Business Monthly*, and voted "Michigan's Highest Rated Touring Group"

by the Michigan Touring Arts Association. The mission statement that appears on the group's Web site ([www.threemenandatenor.com](http://www.threemenandatenor.com)) — with phrases like setting an example, making a difference, bringing generations together — lets you know up front that these are four wholesome guys with something special to share.

It comes as no surprise, then, to learn they completed a tour of Germany between April 30 and May 12 to sing for the schools filled with sons and daughters of American servicemen and women. In addition, General Motors and the Exchange New Car Program sponsored the guys to entertain at Ramstein Air Force Base in Germany. This is the largest U.S. military base outside of North America and a major location for all of the military award presentations. The concert will be featured globally on the Armed Forces Network. From Mark's letters:

"The response to our shows has been overwhelming ... To see the kids and the teachers smile, knowing the pressures that they are all under, is very gratifying. The kids' stories are just breaking me up ... most of them either currently have a parent fighting in Iraq, or they had been gone for a year and just returned in February. We had a standing room only crowd, 450 people at our public show at Vilseck Air Base last night. It was an unbelievable day ... Just after the show was over, the news broke that four soldiers from the Vilseck base were killed in action yesterday, one of which had a kid in the elementary school that saw us in the morning. Real life, real tough ... Our job is to make the

kids smile, the Ten Thousand Smile Tour. It is working. The kids are loving it. We are exhausted ... I have never felt this patriotic, and it has nothing to do with politics. These people believe in America!"

Mark arrived home safely and looks forward to sharing his experiences with fans and friends.



MICHIGAN LE<sup>g</sup>WORK

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Articles/photos may be e-mailed to [breenl@michigan.gov](mailto:breenl@michigan.gov) or faxed to 517/241-1580. The Department of Labor & Economic Growth is an equal opportunity employer/program. This newsletter will be made available in alternate formats on request.